Social Media Guide for SENDIAS Services

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INFORMATION, ADVICE & SUPPORT SERVICES NETWORK

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UNITED FOR DISABLED CHILDREN

Build a SENDIASS social media strategy

It is important to understand what you want social media to do for your service. By developing a strategy, you can clearly layout how you can use it to engage with and reach more individuals. The social media strategy is an internal document for SENDIAS staff only. See example strategies on pages 4-5.

➢ **Audience:** begin by identifying your audience, are they professionals, parents, children, young people?

➢ **Key messages:** what messages do you wish to deliver? For example;

- You provide specialist information, advice and support on a range of SEND-related issues.

➢ **Tone:** what tone will you follow? Will this differ on twitter and Facebook? For example;

- Will you appear professional and informative on Twitter but friendlier, sociable and approachable on Facebook for parents to engage? You can adopt the same approach for both depending on your audience.

➢ **Objectives:** choose 1 or 2 objectives to begin with, this is the main focus of your strategy. For example;

- To promote your SENDIAS Service

- To create an account and achieve 100 followers in X months.

- If you have already established social media accounts, to reach 5% of your total followers, for example if you have 2000 followers on Twitter to make 100 impressions per day.

➢ **Tactics:** how will you aim to meet these objectives? For example;

- The time, frequency and content you will post

Example: Social Media Strategy- Twitter

Audience:

- Professionals (local authority teams in SEND, health, education and social care)

- Parents

- Young people Key Messages:

- The SENDIAS service offers individual casework support on a range of issues relating to SEND.

- The SENDIAS service offers training to local education, health and social care professionals, children, young people and parents to increase knowledge of SEND law, local policy, issues and participation.

- The SENDIAS service provides advocacy to ensure effective support for children and young people with SEND and their families.

Tone: Professional and approachable, informative and responsive.

Objectives	Tactics (time, content and frequency)
1. Reach 5% of total followers (roughly 400 impressions per day)	**Time:** 9am, 2pm, 5pm **Frequency:** three times a day (minimum) **Content:** Themes on days? Mental health on Mondays, News on Tuesdays etc. **Scheduling tool: (for example)** SproutSocial/ Hootsuite
2. Provide practical information and resources to parent carers and professionals.	**Time:** 9am, 2pm, 5pm **Frequency:** three times a day (minimum) **Content:** Themes on days? Mental health on Mondays, News on Tuesdays etc. **Scheduling tool: (for example)** SproutSocial/ Hootsuite

3. Use social media to engage with children and young people	**Time:** before and after school/ college hours
	Frequency: three times a day (minimum)
	Content: easy read guides, pictures, fun accessible content, links to website resources directed at CYP for mental health (see further signposting section at end of document for examples).
	Scheduling tool: (for example) SproutSocial/ Hootsuite

Example: Social Media Strategy- Facebook

Audience:

- Professionals (local authority teams in SEND, health, education, and social care)

- Parent carers

Key Messages:

- The SENDIAS service offers individual casework support on a range of issues relating to SEND.

- The SENDIAS is a statutory service offering confidential and impartial information, advice and support to children and young people with additional needs and their parents/ carers.

- The SENDIAS service provides advocacy to ensure effective support for children and young people with SEND and their families.

Tone: friendly and approachable, informative and responsive, social.

Objectives	Tactics
1. Reach 5% of total followers	**Time:** 10am, 12:30pm, 8pm
2. Provide practical information and resources to parent carers and professionals.	**Frequency:** three times a day (minimum). **Content:** resources, news stories, events **Approach:** participating in conversations – comment (generic, not opinion), sharing posts/content from other members and networks (if relevant to IASSs). Celebrating success & sharing best practice- positive news and case studies from sector.

Build a content calendar

In order to meet your objectives, it is crucial to be consistent with your posts and content. The more consistency, the more followers you will reach as you will become regularly featured in their feeds. A content calendar can facilitate this.

The purpose of a content calendar is to plan ahead and is a common element of many social media strategies. A content calendar helps with maintaining consistency on your social media accounts. See further resources page for link to printable content calendars.

1. Have a clear view of your content and fill the gaps

When you are new to social media it can seem daunting knowing what to post each day and can become overwhelming having to think up content each day whilst trying to manage your own workload. Content calendars can act as a useful resource for the whole team to work together to brainstorm ideas and content, filling any gaps. A content calendar also gives you the opportunity to create your own content, for example #TopTipTuesdays.

Planning ahead and knowing what should be posted and when can help to bring your work into context.

2. Plan and organise around key dates, events and launches

A content calendar allows you to plan content to promote key events, dates or launches that are coming up. If you have reoccurring events/activities or campaigns you can plan for these. Content calendars are also useful to map relevant disability awareness days/weeks in order to ensure you are posting relevant real-time content.

3. Ensure plenty of prep time to get content ready to publish

Content calendars help you to see what's coming up so that you can schedule in time to prepare resources or articles in a timely manner. Overall, a content calendar helps to maintain a consistent social media presence.

To summarise: the further ahead you plan your digital content, the more efficient you become at producing a consistent flow of content, which builds on your services perceived expertise in your subject area (the SEND advice field).

Use a scheduling tool

Posting consistently at the same times each day can become difficult, especially if your responsibilities include manning phone lines, outreach and casework. You may find you are posting one post instead of three a day and skipping days which causes a lack of consistency and can have a negative impact on your social media objectives and followings.

A social media scheduling tool such as SproutSocial can provide a solution to this. Scheduling tools allow you to schedule and pre-plan posts for the week, month or even year if you become that organised!

Whilst SproutSocial is quite costly there are cheaper and free alternatives out there that do the same thing. If this is something you are interested in purchasing see here for a comparison of other services.

Content development

Decide which types of posts you'll be sharing on your social media platforms. There are five main post types that your service can post:

- **Resources:** this could include resources you have created that you share with CYP and parents.

- **Images:** this could include sharing what your team is doing for example, when you are at events or single images/ flyers promoting your service.

- **Videos:** this could include live video streaming, for example Q&A's with parent carers (on Facebook Live) or uploaded video content for example videos created by CYP discussing the challenges and successes of living with SEND as well as any other videos you come across that you think your followers may find beneficial.

- **Text:** if you are posting textual information you will usually receive more engagement and create more impressions if this includes a picture. For example, posting about autism and including a colourful picture from google saying 'autism' will make the post appear more eye-catching to read.

- **Links:** links to external content (owned or curated) would fall under this category, for example, links to reports by the Department for Education or Children's Commissioner.

Repurposing content: You will already have many good existing resources. Reusing content is useful and saves time in the content creation process.

Reusing content allows you to reach a new audience, the first time you posted it, it may only have reached one type of audience i.e. professionals, reword and reuse to target parents and young people.

Social media monitoring and analytics

It is important to monitor your social media statistics, see example below for social media statistics monitoring excel tool. Recording your total followers, impressions, engagements, retweets, likes and replies each month allows you to monitor development and report on this. Fluctuation is normal but make a note of any key increases or decreases in impressions and engagement as this can indicate that there may be more effective times to post content. For example posting at 8:15am on a weekday when everyone is getting ready for work may not receive as much engagement as posting at 10am when everyone is settled at their desks or 8pm once parents have put their children to sleep.

Once you become familiar with Twitter and/or Facebook, you can use the analytics feature on both to see which posts received the most engagement. According to several social media management blogs, posting posts which received most engagement for example, the 'top tweet' in June will boost this post in the twitter posting algorithm if tweeted more frequently.

![Council for Disabled Children logo]

Create a social media policy

Article 3.1 of the [Minimum Standards](#) states that:

The IASS' provides impartial information, advice and support in a range of ways including social media.

It is important to create a social media policy to outline the rules on the use of social media accounts within your service. If social media is a part of a new member of staff's role then a social media policy will easily update them on guidelines around what is acceptable and how your service manages and moderates its social media accounts. A social media policy should include guidance on the following:

- Profile picture: which logo/ photo is to be used to represent the service.

- Text/ Bio: what the accompanying message is that reflects what your service does. For example, Impartial & confidential information, advice and support service for parent carers and children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

- Impartiality: it is important to present yourself as a SENDIAS service and not as the host organisation. The SENDIAS social media accounts must present as impartial in order to ensure there is no display of bias towards or influence by any particular organisation, party, point of view or policy, including local authorities, schools, education ideologies, and campaigns.

- Content that will be posted: detail the content that your service finds acceptable to post on social media.

For example, content that will be posted on Twitter include:

  - In adhering to the real-time nature of Twitter, where possible our tweets will be about relevant events, messages in response to news, or events and topics that have a current 'media presence.'

  - Attempt at proactive retweeting including, actively seeking opportunities to retweet content that helps position the SENDIAS service as a filter for intelligence in the sector and supportive of key stakeholders and partnerships. For these purposes you may choose to retweet interesting content such as government policy announcements and activity, research findings and reports.

  - Content that is permitted on social networking sites includes photographs, videos and comments however it may not be appropriate to share work-related information about service- users in this way due to the nature of casework, data protection, confidentiality.

- Social media etiquette: be mindful of the information disclosed on social media sites as this is public and difficult to remove once live. Staff should ensure that participation in social media sites does not undermine the integrity and objectives of the SENDIAS service. If unsure about potential conflicts of interest, please contact the

IASSN via the shared mailbox. Staff should never post personal opinions on SENDIAS service social media accounts.

- Comments policy: your service should encourage meaningful exchange on its social media platforms and welcome participation from followers on Facebook and Twitter which invites comments.

- How to address negativity on social media: what is the difference between an unhappy customer and a troll?

    - A social media troll is someone who purposely creates conflict on social media channels by posting messages that are particularly controversial or inflammatory with the sole intent of provoking an emotional response from other users. Typically, they will: use foul or derogatory language, not listen to reason, not have a personal picture on their profile and quickly post or reply to messages, suggesting they use their free time to pick fights on the internet.

    - An unhappy customer is someone who has used or attempted to use your service and feels they haven't received what they expected from it.

    - If there's no risk to reputation and the comment is unfounded and you know the person who made the comment is not going to change opinion, then there is no reason to take time to respond.

    - If the comments are about a legitimate grievance or if they could appear to be interpreted both as fair and as unanswered by other content on your social media accounts, it is suggested that you publish a tweet/ post (not a reply) which addresses the issue. It may not solve it, but it acknowledges it.

    - The aim is not to change the mind of the troll or the person with a grievance against your service, whether legitimate or not. It's primarily to protect your services reputation and give other Twitter/ Facebook users a more balanced account of who you are.

    - You should aim to respond only **once** in this way on each grievance, rather than being drawn into a long and potentially endless discussion.

    - All such messages from the SENDIAS services should be calm, measured and factual. The tone should always be positive and polite - no matter how tempting a sarcastic response is!

Social media and confidentiality

Typically, when growing a following on social media accounts, the type of accounts appropriate to follow include:

Twitter: SEND charities and organisations, Mental health charities and organisations, NHS, Ofsted, Government departments, local MP's, Local schools and colleges, parent carers of children and young people with SEND, young people with SEND and professionals in the field.

Facebook: when making a SENDIAS service Facebook page, parents tend to be the main audience that follow or join the page. The list above also applies to Facebook.

Disclaimer: due to the sensitive nature of casework that SENDIAS services engage with, when setting up your Facebook page or Twitter profile, ensure that you include a disclaimer which makes it clear to parent carers, children and young people that the account will not be continuously monitored. For example, within the 'about' section on a Facebook page you could say: 'although we are a confidential information, advice and support service, nothing you say on this page is confidential as it is a social media platform. If you would like to talk to someone in confidence, please contact our SENDIAS service directly by calling X or through email: X.' This can be a pinned tweet on Twitter, meaning it will be the first tweet that people see when they go onto your Twitter account. If including something for children and young people in the disclaimer then you can add: we do not offer counselling. If you would like to talk to someone in confidence, please contact Childline for free by calling 0800 1111 or through their website https://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/

Discussions on social media

Due to the nature of casework and the link between data protection and the confidentiality of a SENDIAS service, discussions over Twitter and Facebook about individual cases must never occur. Even if an individual sends a direct message that only you can see, it is not safe to discuss their case using these platforms. Although you may not reveal any information about an individual's case should they contact you via direct message, there may be potential flaws in the Twitter and Facebook data security systems which could essentially breach the confidentiality of data exchanged through private messaging.

If an individual posts to Twitter or Facebook on the open social media platform asking for specific case advice that the public can see, please delete the post immediately and send them a direct/ private message with the following generic reply:

As our SENDIAS service is a confidential service we cannot offer advice over social media platforms. Please email us at: X or call our direct helpline on: X and we will be happy to support you in the best way we can. We look forward to hearing from you soon. X SENDIAS service.

If an individual sends a direct or private message, please also reply with the above reply.

What can be discussed over social media platforms?

- You can ask your followers what resources they would like to see

- If they ask for advice on how to access a generic service, you can signpost

- If you are conducting surveys, you can post them on social media platforms

- If followers ask about something that is not within your remit you can signpost onto other services

- You can promote outreach work, events, drop-in sessions.

Generally speaking, you should never engage in conversation whereby you give your personal opinion, if for instance someone asks for your advice on signposting you can engage but services should not engage in political, educational or any other debate. If in doubt about which discussions, you can engage with please contact the IASSN shared mailbox: iassn@ncb.org.uk.

Guidelines for engaging with Children and Young People through Social Media

There are many benefits of engaging with CYP through social media. Social media provides a range of unique opportunities for SENDIAS services. It can help you to:

- Promote the benefits of your service to all children and young people.

- Provide a route to engage with seldom heard and hard-to-reach groups of children and young people.

- Engage, connect and develop unique interaction with people in a creative and dynamic medium where users are active participants.

- Disseminate messages about events or campaigns virally among supporters in online communities.

Safeguarding

It is important to promote safe and responsible use of social networking to children and young people.

Do not target children who are likely to be under the minimum age requirement for the social networking platform - which is usually 13 years (check this with the chosen platform) and do not accept friend requests from children under the minimum age for that platform.

Children and young people's safety and security must be the top priority in all we do. While using Social Media is a positive, innovative way of sharing information, resources & tools and reaching many people in a way that works for them, it is vital to always be mindful of your services safeguarding policy and procedure, confidentiality policy and all related policies and procedures. Be mindful that through social media you may have access to sensitive information and always refer to your services policies regarding the handling of that information with regards to privacy, consent and confidentiality. When in doubt discuss with your SENDIAS service manager in those areas.

If through using social media you have any concerns regarding a child's or young person's safety follow your services safeguarding policy/ procedure or contact your local children's safeguarding board. If you have immediate concerns over the safety of any child or young person, contact the police.

Social Media Management Resources

- SproutSocial – Social media management tool https://sproutsocial.com/social-media-management/

- Eclincher – Top 10 social media marketing https://eclincher.com/blog/social-media-management-marketing-tools/

- Coschedule Blog- Marketing blog with social media management content https://coschedule.com/blog/

- Printable Content Calendars- Monthly and Annual content calendars https://coschedule.com/blog/annual-content-calendar-template/